



## LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION COUNTRY PROFILE

# Senegal

### PREPARED FOR

Bureau for Africa

Office of Sustainable Development, Education and Youth Division

United States Agency for International Development

1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20523

### PREPARED BY

Dexis Consulting Group

1412 Eye Street NW, Washington, DC 20005

NOVEMBER 2020

## CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Linguistic Context	4
Official Language of Instruction Policy	4
Class Time	6
Pre-Service Teacher Training Curriculum For Literacy	8
Teacher Language Proficiency/Language Specific Training	9
Teacher In-Service	9
USAID Reading Program Approach and Ongoing Programs	10
Community Engagement within USAID Projects	10
Other Donor Funded Reading Programs	11
References	12

Funding was provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) from the American people under Contract No. AID-OAA-I-15-00019, Task Order No. AID-OAA-TO-I-6-00024. The contents are the responsibility of the USAID Research for Effective Education Programming (REEP-Africa) Project and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government. USAID will not be held responsible for any or the whole of the contents of this publication.

## ABBREVIATIONS

CRFPE	Centres Régionaux de Formation des Personnels de l'Éducation
EGR	Early Grade Reading
FASTEF	Faculty of Sciences and Education and Training Techniques
FLAT	Functional Literacy Assessment Tool
GOS	Government of Senegal
L1	First Language
L2	Second (or additional) Language
LOI	Language of Instruction
LOI1	Language of Instruction Spoken at Home
LOI2	Subsequent Language of Instruction
MOE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
REEP- A	Research for Effective Education Programming—Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

## INTRODUCTION

Enhancing reading skills in the early primary grades is a key education priority for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). Despite some improvements in access and learning in sub-Saharan Africa, literacy levels in the early grades remain low, and progress has been slow. Efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the early grades have led to an increased focus on the role of the language of instruction (LOI). Recent research has demonstrated that mismatches between the LOI and the language that students and teachers speak and understand best can hamper effective teaching and learning (University Research Co., 2019). Thus, it is critical to understand the LOI policy and linguistic context of a country when trying to improve learning outcomes in the early grades, as this can be a potential barrier to gains in literacy and learning outcomes.

Currently, USAID supports **Early Grade Reading (EGR) initiatives in 19 countries across sub-Saharan Africa**. Many policies in these countries have recently shifted toward adopting the LOI spoken at home (LOI1) as the language for initial literacy acquisition, and then transitioning to a second or additional language, such as a regional, national, or international language, as the subsequent language of instruction (LOI2).

Government policies and strategies related to teachers and LOI reflect country priorities, approaches, and objectives for early grade literacy, and thus are crucial to the design of programs that are effectively aligned with country literacy aims and approaches. During the design phase of donor-funded reading programs, decisions are made regarding the manner and extent to which national policies are incorporated into project design, and when alternative approaches or additional elements need to be considered. However, government policies on LOI, and other information relevant for informing design, are often difficult to find and are not easily accessible.



The LOI country profiles aim to address this need. The profiles will allow the USAID Africa Bureau, USAID Missions, and partner organizations to quickly understand the country's linguistic and policy context in order to design an approach that most effectively helps improve EGR outcomes. These profiles, designed for 18 of the countries with current or upcoming USAID EGR initiatives, aim to clearly and succinctly describe and illustrate the country's linguistic landscape and official LOI policy. This country profile in particular provides information on language policy and practice in Senegal.

## LINGUISTIC CONTEXT

According to *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, published by SIL International, there are 38 languages spoken in Senegal, all of which are living. Of these, 31 are indigenous and seven are non-indigenous. Furthermore, three are institutional, 18 are developing, seven are vigorous, eight are in trouble, and two are dying (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2020).

The national language of Senegal is French, which has 4.3 million speakers (of a total population of 14.7 million people). 47,000 speak French as their first language (L1) and 4.3 million speak it as their second language (L2). There are several widely spoken indigenous languages also recognized by the government. Wolof is the most widespread indigenous language, with 12.2 million speakers, of which 5.9 million speak it as their L1 and 6.3 million as their L2. Other widely spoken indigenous languages are Pulaar (4.2 million speakers), Seereer (1.7 million speakers), Maninkakan (1.6 million speakers), Joola with 340,000 speakers, and Sooninke (340,000 speakers) (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2020). See Figure 2 for detailed information on languages and populations that speak them.

## OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION POLICY

There is no official LOI policy in Senegal, though there are government documents that reflect support for the use of national indigenous languages in the formal education sector (RTI International, 2015). For example, Article 22 of the Constitution of 2001 states, "All the national institutions, public or private, have the duty to make their members literate and to participate in the national effort of literacy in one of the national languages" (GOS, 2001, p.8). Further, the General Policy Letter for the Education and Training Sector (2013a) states that one of its seven priorities is to develop the use of national languages in the

### Most widely-spoken languages in Senegal

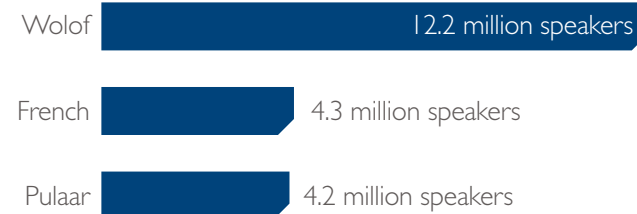


Figure 1. Map of Senegal

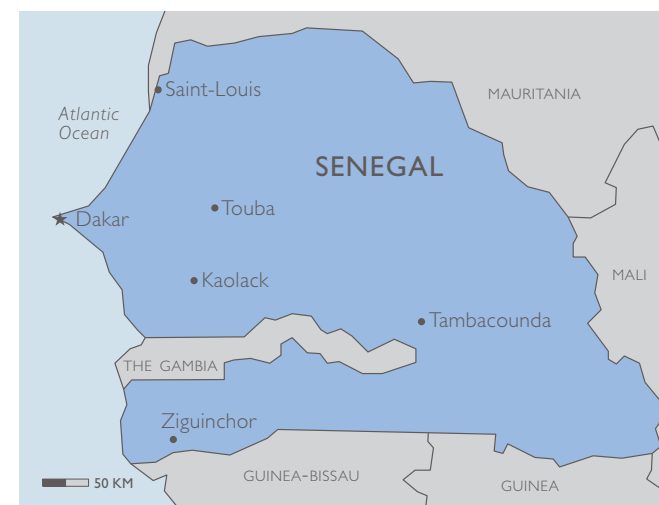
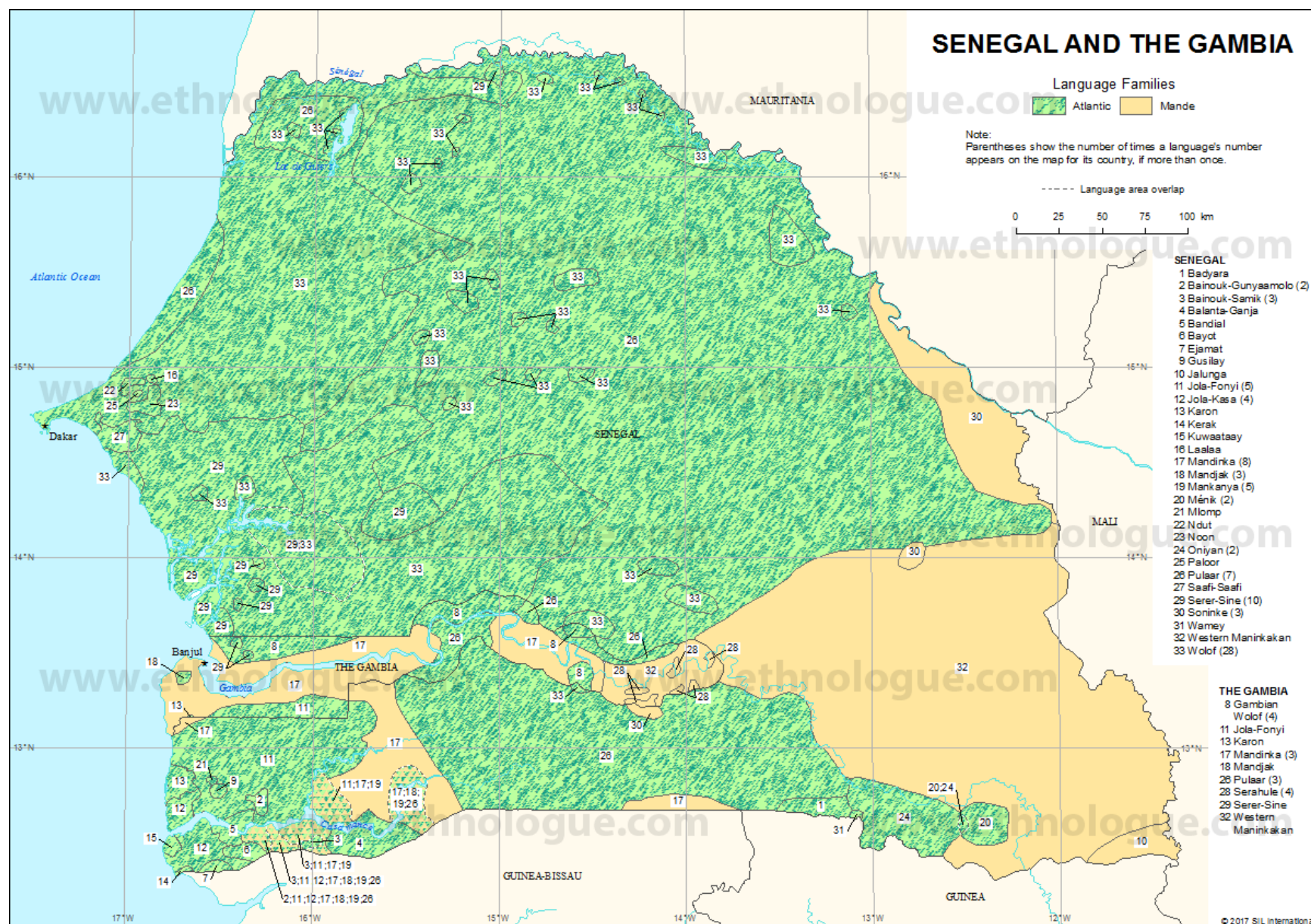


Figure 2. Linguistic mapping of Senegal



Source: Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). (2020). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. Twenty-third edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com>.

education system, and the Program to Improve Quality, Equity and Transparence (2012-2015) states that the Government of Senegal's (GOS) vision includes the introduction of national languages in the early years of schooling (GOS, 2013b).

The Ministry of Education (MOE), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations, and donors have implemented bilingual and multilingual education programs to support the development of students' literacy skills (RTI International, 2015). However, multilingual education has not been officially adopted or implemented at a national scale.

French is used as the primary language of instruction in Senegal. Typically, the students' LI is used as the LOI to learn subjects, including French, in the early grades. As explained:

The experience of the students' spoken language is essentially oral and French is presented as a school language. Likewise, the syllabi do not mention the need to develop an awareness of written culture. Yet there is a significant difference between what students master in their national language(s), acquired in everyday contexts, and the initiation into writing in a second language, acquired at school (Daghe, Martin, Cordeiro, Schneuwly, Thevenaz-Christen, & Toulou, 2017, p. 145).

In this way, the students' LI is used as a means to comprehend subject content until their French language skills are sufficiently developed for use as the LOI.

## CLASS TIME

In Senegal, school is considered mandatory for children from ages seven to twelve. Children enter school in Grade 1 and finish basic education upon completion of Grade 6. In Grades 1 through 6, and particularly in the first three grades, the majority of instructional time focuses on French language development.

A competency-based curriculum was introduced in 2008, which aims to gradually develop specific language skills. The syllabi are broken down according to the three cycles of primary education (Grades 1-2, Grades 3-4, Grades 5-6) and include a detailed program for the teaching of French (Daghe et al., 2017). Each disciplinary field is divided into sub-fields. For example, the disciplinary configuration for French is as follows: for Grades 1 and 2, the sub-fields are oral language or communication, reading with letters/sounds, written production and handwriting. The second cycle (Grades 3-4) contains the sub-fields of communication or



oral expression, written communication, covering reading and the production of writing, and the study of language tools (vocabulary, grammar, conjugation, spelling and handwriting/writing) (Daghe et al., 2017). See Table I for a breakdown of subjects and allocated time.

**Table I. Subjects and Hours Per Week**

Subject	Number of weekly hours in each grade					
	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
<b>French</b>						
Language	7h	7h	7h	7h	7h15m	6h30m
Reading	7h30m	7h30m	5h	5h	4h	4h
Preparatory exercises	30m	30m	—	—	—	—
<b>Writing</b>	1h15m	1h15m	30m	30m	30m	30m
<b>Mathematics</b>	4h30m	4h30m	5h	5h	5h	5h
<b>Local environment study</b>						
History and Geography	—	—	1h30m	1h30m	1h30m	2h
Civic Education and Ethics	—	—	45m	1h	1h	1h
Sciences	—	—	1h	1h	1h30m	2h
Health Education	1h	1h	15m	30m	30m	45m
<b>Aesthetic education</b>						
Artistic Education (drawing)	45m	45m	45m	45m	1h	1h
Handicraft	45m	45m	45m	45m	30m	30m
Music	1h	1h	1h	1h	1h	1h
<b>Physical education</b>	1h45m	1h45m	1h45m	1h45m	2h	2h
<b>Breaks</b>	2h15m	2h15m	2h15m	2h15m	2h15m	2h15m
<b>Total weekly hours</b>	<b>28h15m</b>	<b>28h15m</b>	<b>27h30m</b>	<b>28h</b>	<b>28h</b>	<b>28h30m</b>

Source: UNESCO, International Bureau of Education's 2002 curriculum data set.

## PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING CURRICULUM FOR LITERACY

In Senegal, teaching candidates must complete a nine-month teacher education program offered through the Regional Training Centres for Education Personnel (Centres Régionaux de Formation des Personnels de l'Éducation, or CRFPE) (Junaid & Maka, 2014). Admittance to the CRFPE is contingent upon the completion of upper secondary school and passing an entrance exam that covers knowledge of school subjects, expression and communication skills in French, and the ability to summarize an education theme.

The initial training lasts nine months and aims to prepare candidates to teach the competency-based curriculum, with a focus on how to plan lessons and build teaching-learning sequences based on this curriculum (Thévenaz-Christen & Cordeiro, 2019; Daghe et al., 2017). The training occurs in three phases: 1) development of subject matter knowledge during the first month, 2) vocational training, with a focus on lesson planning and building teacher-learning sequences, and 3) direct experience working in a classroom during the last month of training (Daghe et al., 2017).

In addition to direct immersion into the classroom at the end of the training course, teachers also undergo nine weeks of teaching practicum dispersed throughout the nine months of training. Three weeks of the practicum are spent teaching in Grade 1 and/or Grade 2 classrooms, another three in Grade 3 and/or Grade 4 classrooms, and three additional weeks in Grade 5 and/or Grade 6 classrooms (Akyeampong, Lussier, Pryor & Westbrook, 2013).

The aim of this training is to equip teachers with the skills to teach in French, the national indigenous languages, and Arabic, as well as the ability to manage a bilingual class. The training tends to focus on developing candidates' subject matter expertise rather than the didactics of each discipline, or how to effectively help others learn each subject (Thévenaz-Christen & Cordeiro, 2019; Daghe et al., 2017). Training in reading instruction is included in the six hours devoted to French, linguistics, and literacy each week, without any particular further development (Thévenaz-Christen & Cordeiro, 2019). As such, the training does not address competencies specific to teaching literacy, instead focusing on various reading strategies that teachers can implement in the classroom. As explained by Thévenaz-Christen & Cordeiro:

It [the approach to reading instruction] consists of a comprehensive multidisciplinary approach in which training in reading instruction is based on an applied-learning model represented by the ability to read texts, to mobilize strategies while reading, and to transfer these abilities to teaching reading in class (2019, p. 287).



Despite these requirements for pre-service teacher training, a substantial number of teachers in the country do not appear to hold these qualifications. One study reported that roughly 48% of teachers currently in-service have no professional qualifications (RTI International, 2015), with another study finding this number to be as high as 54% of all teachers (Daghe et al., 2017).

## TEACHER LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY/LANGUAGE SPECIFIC TRAINING

As noted above, one of the goals of pre-service training is to equip teachers with the skills to manage a bilingual classroom and instruction in French, the national indigenous languages, and Arabic. According to Daghe et al., “trainees are expected to have acquired highly specific, targeted knowledge at the end of the training, namely the mastery of the transcription and didactics of national languages” (2017, p. 193). These competencies include an introduction to the general components of linguistics, knowledge of the official Senegalese alphabet and “the initiation into the transcription of national languages” (p. 193). Thus, teachers are expected to learn national indigenous languages, in addition to mastering French and Arabic, yet do not receive instruction in how to teach national languages.

Additionally, while teachers are expected to be able to manage a bilingual class, no specific instruction is provided in how to develop literacy skills in more than one language (e.g. L1 literacy development while simultaneously developing the L2 orally). According to Thévenaz-Christen & Cordeiro, “the training received in this area focuses more on mastering the languages and less on the didactics of bilingualism or on the teaching of reading and writing” (2019, p. 287).

## TEACHER IN-SERVICE

In-service training consists primarily of decentralized training events organized at pre-service training centers or at the school or district level. These training events often take place within the framework of school meetings and multi-district meetings (organized in clusters), which are held on a regular basis (Thévenaz-Christen & Cordeiro, 2019). The multi-district training is organized by district clusters that convene teachers from several different schools.

In-service teacher training is the primary responsibility of education supervisors, or inspectors, who receive training from the Faculty of Sciences and Education and Training Techniques (FASTEF), or of non-tenured secondary-level teachers (Daghe et al., 2017). Training content is guided by common challenges and concerns of the teachers in each particular district. National-level actors also recommend content for teacher trainings, based on analyses of students' performance indicators or curriculum reforms (Junaid & Maka, 2014).

## USAID READING PROGRAM APPROACH AND ONGOING PROGRAMS

In alignment with the U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education, USAID's programming in Senegal aims to support the needs and priorities of the partner country in order to ensure that gains from the programming are sustained.

As such, USAID launched **Lecture Pour Tous (Reading for All)**, a five-year (2016-2021), \$70 million initiative to support the Ministry of Education's (MOE) efforts to boost early grade reading, particularly through its national reading program.<sup>1</sup> USAID/Lecture Pour Tous is implemented by Chemonics International, in addition to several sub-contractors including Plan International and SIL LEAD, in six regions of Senegal: Diourbel, Kaffrine, Kaolack, Louga, Matam, and Saint Louis.

The program is introducing practices, such as the use of mother tongue instruction (in Wolof, Pulaar, and Seereer) and communications to encourage families and communities to become more involved in their children's education. Drawing from local research, USAID/Lecture Pour Tous is working to develop a strong policy framework to improve and sustain gains in student reading outcomes. The aim is to improve student literacy skills so at least 70 percent of Grade 2 students in target schools can read grade-level material. The goals are to:

- Provide evidence-based books and learning materials to students in public and daara Koranic schools
- Support comprehensive, professional development for teachers through training, coaching, and supervision
- Strengthen the support students receive from family and other community members as they learn to read
- Improve policies and systems to scale up and sustain quality reading instruction, materials, and community engagement

---

<sup>1</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.chemonics.com/projects/scaling-early-grade-reading-senegal/> and <http://www.education.gouv.sn/fr/content/lecture-pour-tous>

The **Equitable Access to Education in Southern Senegal** activity, also known as Passerelles (which means Gateway in English) is a five-year \$20 million activity that aims to improve access to high-quality, relevant education for more than 259,000 children and youth (aged approximately 9-16) in four regions: Kedougou, Kolda, Sedhiou and Ziguinchor.<sup>2</sup>

The activity is implemented by FHI360 with partner organizations Save the Children, ENDA Jeunesse Action, and Humanity & Inclusion. Implementation is through close collaboration with the Ministry of Education, community leaders and youth to ensure local ownership. The activity aims to employ an evidence-based approach that builds on best practices in conflict-sensitive and inclusive education, gender equality, social inclusion and positive youth development to:

- Strengthen and extend complementary basic education services to ensure flexible pathways into the formal education system and professional or vocational training
- Improve the relevance, quality and inclusiveness of formal education services
- Support children in successfully making the transition from primary to secondary school by removing social, economic and institutional barriers
- Empower families and communities to recognize their voice in and ownership of local education services

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITHIN USAID PROJECTS

The USAID/Lecture Pour Tous is supporting community engagement with LOI through interventions led by Plan International as part of their five-year (2016-2021), \$4.4 million sub-contract with Chemonics.<sup>3</sup> To improve parent and community engagement in early grade reading, Plan is engaging with both public and religious schools (daaras) in target pilot districts to further integrate them into their surrounding communities

---

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.fhi360.org/projects/usa-id-passerelles-senegal>

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see: <https://www.planusa.org/senegal-lecture-pour-tous>

and promote parents' and caregivers' active participation in their children's reading and learning. Additionally, work is carried out with local government officials, community-based organizations, NGOs, and civil society leaders to encourage dynamic engagement in children's education. In particular, the aim is to:

- Promote increased awareness, understanding, and demand for high-quality education within communities to improve early grade reading instruction and outcomes
- Support evidence-based interventions to engage communities and parents to support reading, including the availability of relevant and age-appropriate materials for students in the early grades
- Provide parents and caregivers with materials and training to support children's reading and writing at home, including tools to promote home-school communication
- Provide parents and civil society with the skills, techniques, and forums they need to effectively monitor the delivery of early grade reading instruction in schools

In all target communities in the six regions (Diourbel, Kaffrine, Kaolack, Louga, Matam, and Saint Louis) a social behavior change communication campaign is underway to raise awareness and garner support for early grade reading improvement among relevant actors and ensure community buy-in for program initiatives.

## OTHER DONOR FUNDED READING PROGRAMS

Alongside USAID, several other organizations are involved in implementing projects to address literacy and language issues, which are detailed below, across Senegal.

### Save the Children's Literacy Boost Program

The two-year (2018–2020), \$349,000 Literacy Boost Program is implemented by Save the Children and funded by private donors (primarily Woodside Energy

Foundation).<sup>4</sup> The activity aims to provide quality education and protection to vulnerable children through community engagement and empowerment in the regions of Pikine, Guédiawaye and Rufisque (Dakar). The activity endeavors to reach nearly 20,600 girls and 16,900 boys through targeted interventions to improve pupils' reading and writing skills in 50 primary schools and 25 preschools. The 750 beneficiary teachers also receive training and support in pedagogy and classroom management. The training employs a strategy that involves the development of teacher circles and the promotion of behavior change. By the end of the project, 750 teachers and 75 school management committees will be trained, as well as more than 431,416 parents and guardians.

### World Vision's Unlock Literacy project

World Vision's Unlock Literacy project aims to improve the quality of education and considerably increase the number of children who can read by the age of 11.<sup>5</sup> It aims to improve the reading skills of students starting from the first three years of primary school by training children on the five components of reading (phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension), organizing reading clubs at the community level, training parents on supporting children at home, and creating additional reading resources from local materials. From 2016 to 2018, 725 teachers were trained in teaching innovative reading; 212 community book clubs were set up; and 324 community volunteers trained to support children.

Unlock Literacy is supported by the Functional Literacy Assessment Tool (FLAT) measure, used to assess students at the end of the last stage of elementary school and to develop remedial plans in reading. The goal is to extend the approach with government to all schools in the country to reach 2,339,834 children (ages 6 to 11).

4 For more information, see: <https://www.pfongue.org/Literacy-Boost-in-Senegal.html>

5 For more information, see: <https://www.wvi.org/fr/senegal/article/renforcement-des-capacit%C3%A9s-des-enfants-%C3%A0-lire-et-comprendre>

## REFERENCES

- Akyeampong, K., Lussier, K., Pryor, J., & Westbrook, J. (2013). Improving teaching and learning of basic maths and reading in Africa: Does teacher preparation count? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 33(3), 272–282. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2012.09.006>
- Daghe, A. S., Martin, L.I., Cordeiro, S. G., Schneuwly, B., Thevenaz-Christen, T., & Toulou, S. (2017). *Teaching and learning to read in a multilingual context. Ways forward for three sub-Saharan African countries (Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal)*. Geneva, Switzerland: IBE – UNESCO.
- Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). (2020). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. Twenty-third edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com>.
- Government of Senegal (GOS). (2001). *Senegal's Constitution of 2001 with Amendments through 2016*. Retrieved from [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Senegal\\_2016.pdf?lang=en](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Senegal_2016.pdf?lang=en)
- Government of Senegal (GOS). (2013a). *Lettre de Politique Générale pour le secteur de l'Education et la formation*. (General Policy Letter for the Education and Training Sector).
- Government of Senegal (GOS). (2013b). *Programme d'Amélioration de la Qualité, de l'Équité et de la Transparence (PAQUET)* (Program to Improve Quality, Equity and Transparency).
- Junaid, M. I., & Maka, F. (2014). *In-Service Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa. A Synthesis Report*. ADEA.
- RTI International. (2015). *Report on Language of Instruction in Senegal*. Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development.
- Thévenaz-Christen, T., & Cordeiro, G. S. (2019). Senegal: Improving Training to Bolster Reading and Writing Skills in French as a Second Language. In *Improving Early Literacy Outcomes* (pp. 279-299). Brill Sense.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2014). *Teaching and learning to read in a multilingual context: Ways Forward for three sub-Saharan African countries [Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal]*. Geneva: Bureau international d'éducation de l'UNESCO.
- University Research Co., LLC. (2019). *Handbook on Language of Instruction Issues in Reading Programs*. Washington, DC: United States Agency for International Development (USAID). <https://www.urc-chs.com/sites/default/files/urc-grn-instruction-issues.pdf>